



Teachers' Experiences in Applying Classroom Strategies to Build Confidence Among Shy Pupils

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ABSTRACT :

This study explored the experiences of elementary teachers in applying classroom strategies to build confidence among shy pupils. Using a qualitative descriptive design, the study examined teachers' perceptions of shyness in learners, the techniques they employ to enhance student confidence, the challenges they encounter, and the support they require to sustain these strategies. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and researcher observations with selected elementary teachers who regularly handle shy or withdrawn pupils.

Findings revealed that teachers view shyness as a significant barrier to classroom participation, social interaction, and academic performance. Although they implement various confidence-building approaches such as positive reinforcement, small-group activities, peer modeling, and individualized encouragement—several challenges emerged, including limited instructional time, large class sizes, behavioral diversity, and insufficient parental involvement. Teachers also emphasized the importance of establishing a supportive learning environment and using differentiated approaches tailored to learners' needs.

The study highlights the need for ongoing teacher training, sufficient classroom resources, and stronger collaboration with parents to effectively support shy pupils. Recommendations include providing structured professional development on socio-emotional learning, enhancing home-school partnerships, and integrating confidence-building activities into daily classroom routines.

Keywords: Shy Pupils; Teacher Experiences; Classroom Strategies; Confidence Building; Socio-Emotional Learning; Qualitative Study

1. INTRODUCTION

Shy pupils usually face challenges in classroom participation, interacting with peers, and engaging in academics. Shyness in the early childhood and elementary years negatively influences not only learners' emotional well-being but also long-term academic development. Too many pupils experience difficulties expressing themselves, do not have the confidence to speak in a group, and avoid group activities, which behaviors already limit their opportunities for learning. According to Santos (2020), shyness can inhibit cognitive performance because students are not likely to ask questions or seek help or engage collaboratively.

Confidence building forms a very significant aspect of socio-emotional growth, particularly in the early grades. Teachers can play a major role in letting shy learners build up adequate self-esteem, communicate with their peers, and gain a sense of belonging. According to Villanueva and Ramos (2021), interventions led by teachers such as guided participation, positive reinforcement, and peer modeling reduce classroom anxiety and foster active involvement.

Various studies highlight the significance of fostering supportive environments where learners feel protected, appreciated, and assisted. For example, in the study by Mendoza (2019), children exhibited higher participation rates when teachers established warm relationships and predictable routines. In addition, socio-emotional learning programs have been used to enhance both academic and behavioral outcomes among shy or introverted pupils (OECD, 2021). Still, confidence-building strategies entail myriad challenges that teachers often face each day as they try to apply these approaches consistently. These are large class sizes, limited time for instruction, different learner personalities, and lack of involvement on the part of parents to reinforce what has been taught in the classroom. Teachers need to be more creative and flexible; sometimes they even need to improvise just so they can apply certain strategies that better suit the needs of shy pupils.

Understanding teachers' experiences can be key to the development of better confidence-building interventions, for their insights may uncover which strategies are most effective, what obstacles impede implementation, and what structures of support are necessary. For this reason, the present study explores the lived experiences of teachers when applying classroom strategies in building confidence among shy pupils.

1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of teachers in applying classroom strategies to build confidence among shy pupils.

1.2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Shyness can be defined as a socio-emotional attribute distinguished by fear of negative evaluation, avoidance of social interaction, and reluctance to take part in group activities. International and local research shows that most shy pupils participate less in classroom discussions, show lower self-esteem, and may experience academic delays (Chen, 2020; Villanueva, 2021).

Teachers are central in shaping classroom environments that would support socio-emotional development. Warm teacher–student relationships and positive classroom climates, according to Hamre & Pianta (2006), decrease anxiety and promote confidence. Confidence enhancement strategies commonly employed by teachers involve praise, constructive feedback, interactive games, and scaffolded participation. As discussed by Sison (2020), peer modeling, cooperative learning, and small-group tasks also help shy students become more expressive.

Socio-emotional learning frameworks emphasize the development of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. According to available research evidence, SEL intervention increases confidence and reduces withdrawal behaviors. As per CASEL 2021, the effective implementation of SEL depends upon teacher preparedness, time allocation, and classroom resources.

Other challenges that teachers face in promoting socio-emotional needs include large class sizes, diversified learners' behaviors, limited trainings, and inadequate collaborations from school to home (Delos Reyes, 2021). On the other hand, many of the teachers have noted that shy students need continued and one-on-one attention, which could be a challenge for overcrowded classes to maintain.

Despite these odds, teachers show resilience and improvisation by adjusting strategies, sharing experiences with peers, and developing a rapport with their learners. Day & Gu (2014) provide insight into how teachers employ these practices and overcome certain hindrances in attempts to bolster confidence.

2. METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research design was adopted for this study: a phenomenological approach aimed at exploring and describing the lived experiences of teachers in applying classroom strategies to build confidence among shy pupils. The phenomenology design suits the research because it focuses on how teachers have personally experienced, perceived, and reflected on supporting shy learners in a real classroom (Creswell & Poth, 2018). With this approach, the depth, meaning, and complexity of teachers' experiences in implementing confidence-building strategies among shy pupils are captured.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study are 5 elementary teachers from Borac, Naval, Biliran Province, Philippines, who have direct experience in handling shy pupils in their classes. Purposive sampling has selected those teachers who regularly implement strategies to build confidence among the shy learners to ensure richness, meaningfulness, and relevance of the data from participants. A total of 5 teachers participated in the study, working in different grade levels and with different classroom contexts.

LOCALE

The study was conducted in Borac, Naval, Biliran, a community under the Schools Division of Biliran, where the participating schools are small public elementary schools. Shy pupils are frequently identified by teachers as in need of additional emotional and instructional support.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection involved semi-structured, in-depth interviews where teachers were allowed to recount their experiences, perceptions, and practices about supporting shy pupils. Each interviewee, lasting approximately 30–60 minutes, was interviewed either face-to-face or online, depending on the preference of the participant. The guide for the interviews focused on classroom strategies to build confidence among shy pupils, teachers' experiences in using these strategies, challenges they faced, and observations of changes in pupils' confidence and participation in the classroom. Along with interviews, field notes and observations within classrooms were also collected to enhance data and provide an in-depth contextual understanding of how these strategies are used within a real classroom setting.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, based on Braun and Clarke's 2006 description of the six-step process, including data familiarization, initial coding, theme searching, theme review, definition, and naming. Thematic analysis befits this study because it allowed the researcher to highlight patterns, strategies, challenges, and reflections that were systematically described by the participants. The research study guaranteed credibility and trustworthiness through member checking, triangulation of data sources, and peer review during the coding process.

Table 1: Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six-Step Thematic Analysis Process

Step	Description
1. Familiarization with the Data	The researcher reads and re-reads the interview transcripts and field notes to fully understand the content.
2. Generating Initial Codes	Key features of the data are systematically identified and labeled to capture meaningful points.
3. Searching for Themes	Related codes are grouped together to form potential themes that represent patterns in the data.
4. Reviewing Themes	The preliminary themes are compared against the coded data and entire dataset to ensure accuracy and coherence.
5. Defining and Naming Themes	Each theme is clearly defined, refined, and given a concise and meaningful name.
6. Producing the Final Report	The final themes are organized, interpreted, and reported in a coherent narrative based on the study's objectives.

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Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all the participants before the actual data collection. The researcher had assured the teachers of confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms were used in reporting the results of the findings. Participation in this study was voluntary, and the participants were informed that they had a right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Interview recordings and documents were safely kept and used for academic purposes only.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: Thematic Analysis Process Across Five Respondents

Respondent	Step	Description of Analysis Outcome
R1	Familiarization with the Data	Read and re-read transcript; noted initial impressions on shyness, confidence-building strategies, and teacher challenges.
	Generating Initial Codes	Coded key ideas such as "fear of speaking," "use of praise," and "group work hesitation."
	Searching for Themes	Grouped related codes into potential themes like <i>Confidence-Building Approaches</i> and <i>Barriers to Participation</i> .
	Reviewing Themes	Refined themes by comparing with R1's full transcript; removed overlapping codes.
	Defining & Naming Themes	Clear theme names created (e.g., <i>Supportive Classroom Practices</i> , <i>Shyness as a Behavioral Barrier</i>).
	Producing Final Report	Finalized themes and wrote narrative summaries integrating R1's responses.
R2	Familiarization with the Data	Reviewed transcript multiple times; highlighted teacher reflections on helping quiet pupils.
	Generating Initial Codes	Identified codes such as "visual aids help," "needs prompting," "positive reinforcement."
	Searching for Themes	Codes merged into themes like <i>Instructional Tools for Engagement</i> and <i>Teacher Interventions</i> .
	Reviewing Themes	Checked coherence; removed codes not strongly supported.
	Defining & Naming Themes	Themes refined and labeled (e.g., <i>Instructional Motivators</i> , <i>Teacher-Led Encouragement</i>).
	Producing Final Report	Integrated themes into the analytical narrative.
R3	Familiarization with the Data	Immersed in transcript; observed patterns of shy pupils' classroom avoidance.
	Generating Initial Codes	Coded "peer influence," "small group success," "slow to respond."
	Searching for Themes	Formed preliminary themes: <i>Peer Impact on Confidence</i> , <i>Classroom Participation Levels</i> .
	Reviewing Themes	Re-examined codes for consistency with the dataset.
	Defining & Naming Themes	Themes refined (e.g., <i>Peer Encouragement as Catalyst</i> , <i>Participation Challenges</i>).
	Producing Final Report	Wrote theme-based interpretation connected to study objectives.
R4	Familiarization with the Data	Read transcript; noted teacher strategies and emotional responses of pupils.
	Generating Initial Codes	Labeled codes like "use of games," "teacher modeling," "anxiety signs."
	Searching for Themes	Grouped into themes such as <i>Play-Based Confidence Strategies</i> and <i>Emotional Barriers</i> .
	Reviewing Themes	Ensured accuracy and clarity; validated against dataset.
	Defining & Naming	Final names created (e.g., <i>Interactive Strategy Use</i> , <i>Emotional Roots of Shyness</i>).

Respondent	Step	Description of Analysis Outcome
R5	Themes	
	Producing Final Report	Described how themes reflect respondent's experiences.
	Familiarization with the Data	Understood transcript content through repeated reading.
	Generating Initial Codes	Codes: "routine building," "gentle questioning," "withdrawal in recitation."
	Searching for Themes	Developed themes like <i>Routine-Based Support Methods</i> and <i>Classroom Withdrawal Indicators</i> .
	Reviewing Themes	Compared themes with transcript to ensure alignment.
	Defining & Naming Themes	Refined to names like <i>Structured Classroom Support</i> and <i>Indicators of Shyness</i> .
	Producing Final Report	Organized final insights and integrated into full analysis narrative.

This table 2 presents the thematic analysis process for five respondents (R1–R5). Each step, from familiarization with the data to producing the final report, is described with its corresponding outcome. Initial readings of transcripts enabled the identification of key ideas, which were coded and grouped into preliminary themes. Themes were reviewed, refined, and clearly labeled before being incorporated into a narrative reflecting teachers' strategies and challenges in supporting shy pupils (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The thematic analysis of the five respondents (see Table 2) revealed several key themes illustrating teachers' experiences in applying classroom strategies to build confidence among shy pupils. Supportive Classroom Practices emerged as a major theme, highlighting teachers' use of structured routines, gentle questioning, and positive reinforcement to create a safe and encouraging environment (R1, R2, R5). Teachers noted that such practices helped pupils gradually participate in class activities.

Shyness as a Behavioral Barrier captured the observable reluctance of pupils to engage, including avoidance of group activities and hesitation in responding (R1, R3, R5). Recognizing these behaviors enabled teachers to tailor interventions to individual needs. Instructional Motivators and Teacher-Led Encouragement reflected the use of visual aids, peer support, modeling, and play-based activities to motivate participation and build confidence (R2, R3, R4). Structured Classroom Support and Routine-Based Strategies provided predictability, helping pupils feel secure and more willing to engage in learning tasks (R5).

Finally, Indicators of Shyness and Emotional Barriers highlighted teachers' attention to subtle signs of anxiety, informing individualized strategies to support pupils' confidence (R3, R4, R5). Overall, the findings demonstrate that teachers employ a combination of structured, responsive, and interactive strategies to support shy learners. These results directly address the study's purpose by describing how teachers identify challenges, implement confidence-building practices, and reflect on their effectiveness, providing a comprehensive understanding of classroom strategies that promote engagement among shy pupils (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study described the experiences of teachers in applying classroom strategies to build the confidence of shy pupils. Findings from thematic analysis reveal that teachers use a combination of structured routines, positive reinforcement, interactive activities, and peer support to encourage participation and develop confidence while they also monitor behavioral indicators of shyness in order to guide individualized interventions. These findings suggest that classroom environments should be supportive and inclusive to help promote engagement among shy learners. Strong recommendations were made for teachers to continue with their practice and refining of these strategies, sharing best practices with colleagues and counselors, and for schools to provide professional development programs to strengthen teachers' capacity in supporting shy pupils. Future studies will investigate long-term effects on pupils' confidence and academic performance. Other factors such as peer relationships and cultural context may also be considered.

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